

American Community Survey Subject Definitions

The following subject definitions correspond to the variables presented in the map. For a complete listing of all subjects [click here](#).

Income of Households – This includes the income of the householder and all other individuals 15 years old and over in the household, whether they are related to the householder or not. Because many households consist of only one person, average household income is usually less than average family income. Although the household income statistics cover the past 12 months, the characteristics of individuals and the composition of households refer to the time of interview. Thus, the income of the household does not include amounts received by individuals who were members of the household during all or part of the past 12 months if these individuals no longer resided in the household at the time of interview. Similarly, income amounts reported by individuals who did not reside in the household during the past 12 months but who were members of the household at the time of interview are included. However, the composition of most households was the same during the past 12 months as at the time of interview.

Median Income – The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median. For households and families, the median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income. The median income for individuals is based on individuals 15 years old and over with income. Median income for households, families, and individuals is computed on the basis of a standard distribution. Median income is rounded to the nearest whole dollar. Median income figures are calculated using linear interpolation.

Mean Income – Mean income is the amount obtained by dividing the aggregate income of a particular statistical universe by the number of units in that universe. For example, mean household income is obtained by dividing total household income by the total number of households.

For the various types of income, the means are based on households having those types of income. For household income and family income, the mean is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income. The mean income for individuals is based on individuals 15 years old and over with income. Mean income is rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

Care should be exercised in using and interpreting mean income values for small subgroups of the population. Because the mean is influenced strongly by extreme values in the distribution, it is especially susceptible to the effects of sampling variability, misreporting, and processing errors. The median, which is not affected by extreme values, is, therefore, a better measure than the mean when the population base is small. The mean, nevertheless, is shown in some data products for most small subgroups because, when weighted according to the number of cases, the means can be computed for areas and groups other than those shown in Census Bureau tabulations.

Per Capita Income – Per capita income is the mean income computed for every man, woman, and child in a particular group including those living in group quarters. It is derived by dividing the aggregate income of a particular group by the total population in that group. Per capita income is rounded to the nearest whole dollar.